



## Swan Lake 2005



Swan Lake is a beautiful 12-acre lake located in Byrd Park (the City of Richmond's largest park) in the heart of Richmond. Swan Lake is the middle lake in the Park's series of three. It has a large island near its western shore. A large flock of geese reside at the lake year-round, adding to the entertainment value for visitors. The entire shoreline of the lake is accessible to anglers.

Historically, this lake has had relatively poor fish populations. The largemouth bass population was typically low, bream were virtually non-existent, and the yellow perch and bullhead catfish populations were dominated by small fish. Several steps were taken to address these issues. The weed problem was brought under control and hybrid bream, adult bass, and 12-inch channel catfish were stocked. This helped increase bass abundance and reduce the overabundance of the bullhead and yellow perch populations.

In 2004, seven species of fish were collected using electrofishing: largemouth bass, bluegill, brown bullhead, blue catfish, channel catfish, black crappie, and yellow perch. Adult bass were not abundant, but reproduction was excellent as evidenced by the collection of approximately 90 young-of-the-year (fish spawned in spring, 2004). Only one adult bass was collected. Given the lack of suitable forage fish for adult bass in this lake, it is unlikely that stocking would help maintain an adequate population.

Most of the other fish populations were relatively low and dominated by small fish. Bluegill continued to be scarce in Swan Lake, only 6 were collected along the entire shoreline and around the island, despite efforts to establish a population via stocking of both pure bluegill and hybrid bluegill. There were a few brown bullheads in the 12-14-inch range that would be considered "eating size". In addition, there was evidence of good bullhead reproduction. This is a species often looked down upon by anglers, but the larger ones can provide a decent fight and they're very good table fare.

The surprise of the sampling event was the collection of a 30-pound blue catfish. This fish must have been put in the lake by an angler who caught it from the nearby James River, although it was probably much smaller when it was released. After being weighed and measured, this fish was released back into the lake. Some lucky angler is in for the surprise of his life when he/she hooks into this fish.

A number of channel catfish were collected, but based on their sizes, it is obvious that they were from a previous year's stocking. They were all fat and in great condition. We witnessed a young boy battle one of these nice channel catfish for about 10 minutes before he finally landed it. Curiously, we did not collect any channel catfish from the stocking that was done just 3 months prior to the sample. It could be that most of them had already been caught by anglers. We plan to conduct an angler

survey in spring, 2005 to evaluate the amount of fishing pressure and fish harvest on this lake.

Although black crappie and yellow perch were collected, all of the crappie and most of the perch were small.

Assuming an adequate supply of catfish is available, this lake should continue to provide good angling opportunities with an occasional bass, bream, bullhead, or perch being caught too.